

# Listen

## A Seeker's Resource for Spiritual Direction

O C T O B E R 2 0 1 3

V O L 7 : I S S U E 4

### SOAK IN WATER, LIFE

"Today, take a bubble bath," instructed Paula D'Arcy, the retreat facilitator. Seventeen of us sat circled in dynamic stillness. Morning light breezed through windows, dancing upon the hardwood floor. Vivid pink protea flowers and scattered plumeria blossoms brought elegant island artistry and focus. In a yurt, I gazed at my feet stretched before me, and became present to the present moment: Molokai, Hawaii, and my yes. Something within me was waking up, and emerging. It was more than good, it—whatever "it" was—would be great.

"Take a bubble bath" is wise guidance for every one of us who is immersed in a full and busy daily life. A soak is particularly valuable if we feel fragmentation, grief, or a desire to cultivate the unknown. A bath—the luxury of clean water, time, a tub—offers consolation, tenderness, an embrace. For thousands of years, wisdom offers: soak in water. Let go. Breathe. Reconnect. Be embraced. A bath offers us time to ponder, "What am I present to?"

With deliberation I made time for a bubble bath every day of my retreat at the Hui Ho'olana. One evening, soaking decadently in an outdoor claw-footed tub, high upon a hillside, palm trees rustling, a vast starry night



Hawaiian Goose — *Branta sandvicensis*

extending around me and as far as I could vision into the ocean horizon, I felt myself untangling, as a seed of the unknown future began rooting and emerging within me.

In her book, *The Unbearable Wholeness of Being*, Ilia Delio writes, "Our challenge today is to trust the power of love at the heart of life, to let ourselves be seized by love, to create and invent ways for love to evolve into a global wholeness of unity, compassion, justice, and peacemaking. As a process of evolution, the universe is incomplete, and we humans are incomplete. We can change, grow, and become something new. We have the power to do so, but do we have the will?" (xxv).

My daily bubble bath, my yes and the yes from the others who gathered in the circle, bring forth an emerging wisdom, necessary for our time. Roshi Joan Halifax wrote, "We can discover

ourselves to be everywhere and in everything, and we can know the activity of the world as not separate from who we are but rather of what we are." After a week retreat, I departed from Molokai with renewed knowledge that my responsibility is to cultivate the seed of love in myself and in others. The will to love fiercely into the unknown, and engage in the activity of the world takes courage, companions, and bubble baths.

### REFLECT

- Pause and be still. Listen to your heart beat. What sensations, emotions, feelings or thoughts are you present to, within your own body and skin, now and here?
- Will you make time to take a bubble bath? 🦉

—Pegge Erkeneff

### SEEDS OF INTEREST:

- Field Guide: Spiritual Direction is...
- Poem: *Spiritual Direction*
- Book Review: *Crafting Calm: Projects and Practices for Creativity and Contemplation*
- Poem: *Ode to a Coast Live Oak*
- Global Resources
- Ask Owl





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## SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

### REFLECTIONS FROM DIFFERENT SPIRITUAL TRADITIONS

Spiritual direction is the contemplative practice of helping another person or group to awaken to the mystery called God in all of life, and to respond to that discovery in a growing relationship of freedom and commitment.  
– James Keegan, SJ, Roman Catholic

Spiritual direction can mean different things to different people. Some people understand it to be the art of listening carried out in the context of a trusting relationship. It is when one person is trained to be a competent guide who then *companions* another person, listening to that person's life story with an ear for the movement of the Holy, of the Divine. – Rev. Jeffrey S. Gaines, Presbyterian

The object of spiritual direction is to cultivate one's ability to discern God's presence in one's life—to notice and appreciate moments of holiness, to maintain an awareness of the interconnectedness of all things, to explore ways to be open to the Blessed Holy One in challenging and difficult moments as well as in joyful ones. The spiritual director serves as a companion and witness, someone who helps you (sometimes with questions, sometimes just by listening) to discern the divine where you might have missed it and to integrate that awareness into your daily life, your *tefillah*, your *tikkun olam* work, your study, your ritual practice. – Rabbi Jacob Staub, Jewish

Islam means to surrender to God in peace. The journey of surrender is the lifelong work of transforming the ego, opening the heart, and becoming conscious of God. We need to bring Divinity into the center of our lives. The guidance, inspiration, and support of a spiritual director, spiritual teacher, or spiritual friend is crucial to this process. The thirteenth century sage Rumi says that whoever travels without a guide needs two hundred years for a two-day journey. A Muslim spiritual director, teacher, or friend has abiding faith in the spiritual guidance abounding in the Qur'an, insights of the Prophet Muhammad, and teachings of Islamic sages. – Sheikh Jamal Rahman, Muslim

Spiritual direction is encompassed in the Buddhist student-teacher relationship; the connection between spiritual director and directee is most reminiscent of the spiritual friend relationship—known in ancient Pali as *kalyanamitta*. This sacred friendship is one in which there is a depth of connection and commitment—a joining

together through empathy and wisdom. In Buddhist spiritual direction, the spiritual director, in mindful presence, shares in a heartfelt way the feelings expressed by the spiritual directee—meeting the spiritual directee's inherent goodness—the sacred still place within. Through empathy and wisdom, the spiritual director skillfully leads the spiritual directee to know his or her inherent goodness, inspiring the directee to envision and meet his or her true potential. – Karin J. Miles, MA, *Interfaith*

Spiritual direction is the contemplative practice of accompanying (or joining with) a person or group as they awaken to the spiritual in everyday life, and it is the shared intentions and supports for the directee to have a deeper relationship with spirit through all phases of life.  
– Dale Rhodes, Taoist

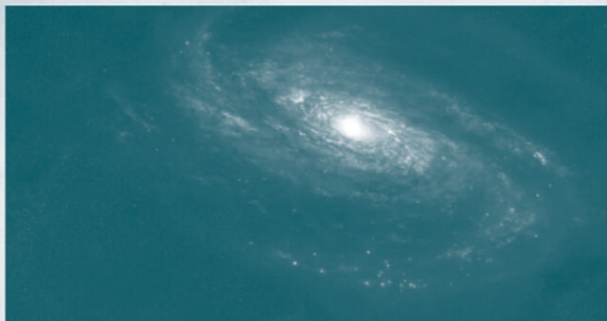
To live one's life in union with the Divine and to realize the freedom of one's highest Self is the ultimate goal of the Eastern philosophy of Yoga. Spiritual direction, from the perspective of Yoga, is founded on the understanding that God lives within the hearts of each of us and of all creation. The aim of spiritual direction is the formation of a partnership between God, the spiritual directee, and the spiritual director in a holy alchemy, which lovingly upholds the spiritual directee during exploration and deepening of one's relationship with God, others, all creation, and the higher Self. Through deep listening, powerful questions, and reflection of the thoughts and feelings conveyed by the directee, spiritual direction provides an opportunity to regularly reflect on life's events and circumstances from a spiritual perspective.  
– Donna Woods, *Philosophy of Yoga*

Spiritual guidance is being present in the moment, seeing and honoring the sacred mystery of the soul of another. It is witnessing this mystery and reflecting it back in word, prayer, thought, presence, and action. Spiritual guidance is modeling a deep relationship with the Divine and standing in faith and love with the other as that relationship unfolds. Spiritual guidance is a journey of deep healing and an affirmation of Holiness (wholeness), the Sacred, and the Mystery of all of life.  
– Carol A. Fournier, MS, NCC, *Interfaith*

To read more descriptions of spiritual direction, go to [www.sdiworld.org](http://www.sdiworld.org).







## spiritual direction

i listen

so out of a darkness

a soul might say

now i see

– Sister Lou Ella Hickman, IWBS [Texas, USA]

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# BOOK REVIEW

***Crafting Calm: Projects and Practices for Creativity and Contemplation***  
by Maggie Oman Shannon

Berkeley, CA; Viva Editions, 2013

240 pages, CAD\$19.95, GBPE11.99, USD\$16.95

Reviewed by Karen Erlichman

Spiritual practice can take many forms, and reflects both ancient and contemporary sensibilities. Maggie Oman Shannon, an interfaith minister, spiritual director, author, and life coach, has published her sixth book, *Crafting Calm: Projects and Practices for Creativity and Contemplation*. It is a wonderful collection that will especially delight seekers and spiritual guides who enjoy creative expression as a spiritual practice.

Shannon interviewed eight artists for this book and also included contributions from twenty additional esteemed teachers, spiritual guides, clergy and artists whose vision and wisdom deepen the wellspring of inspiration that this book offers. She asks, "What if we were to shift our view of 'craft' from being a skill for a few to being a sign of the inner life force in each of us?" (xxiii).

The book is divided into eight thematic sections about crafting for Calm, Clarity, Comfort, Contemplation, Creation, Community, Connection with Others, and Connection with Spirit. Each theme sets the intention and focus for the section, and each section includes a narrative section, questions for journaling and reflection called "Inner Inquiries," a DIY (Do It Yourself) section with crafting recipes and guidelines, and finally, suggested resources "Guides for the Path." Inspirational

quotes from a variety of faith traditions and cultures are peppered throughout each chapter, some from poetry and sacred text, and others are testimonies and direct quotes from the artists she interviewed.

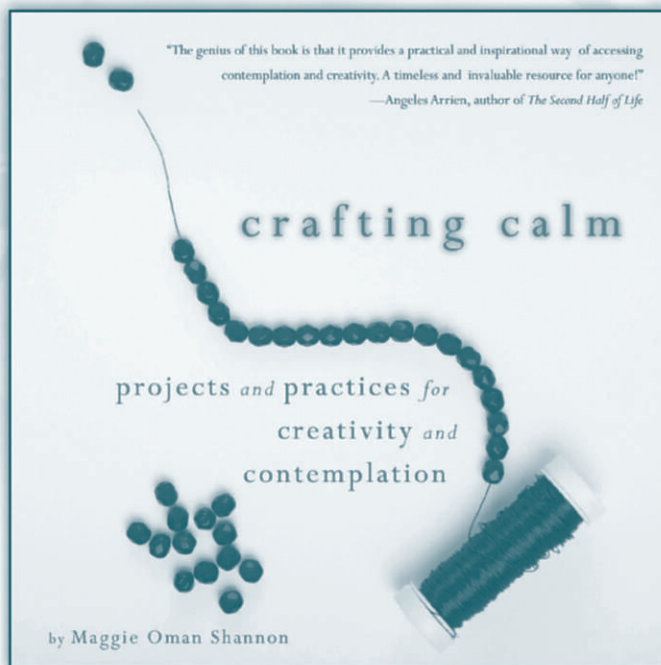
*Crafting Calm* is filled with crafting ideas and projects include candles, talking sticks, icons, inner wisdom dolls, prayer pots, and more. The book has something to offer for longtime creative people, as well as everyone who may previously have shied away from creative expression for fear of "not doing it right" or "not being a good enough artist." There is something for everyone here, and the ideas can be as simple as using rocks and stones or as advanced as baking bread or making jewelry.

I often use stones with retreat participants, so Shannon's "Prayer Stones" in the chapter on Crafting Connection with Others gave me some wonderful new ideas: "Used as a prayer stone, a simple rock becomes something we literally can hold on to—something that we can take into a doctor's office, finger while driving when at a stoplight, or place beneath our computer

monitor to simply remind us to pray" (185).

*Crafting Calm* will appeal to a broad range of readers. The Torah (Hebrew Scripture) begins with the story of Divine Creation, and this book is a delicious resource for living into our calling as God's partners in co-creation. ✍

—Karen Lee Erlichman, MSS, LCSW, lives in San Francisco, California, USA, where she provides psychotherapy, spiritual direction, supervision, and mentoring. She is a core faculty member in the Spiritual Guidance Program at Sophia University in Palo Alto, California. Contact her at: [kareneLCSW@gmail.com](mailto:kareneLCSW@gmail.com).



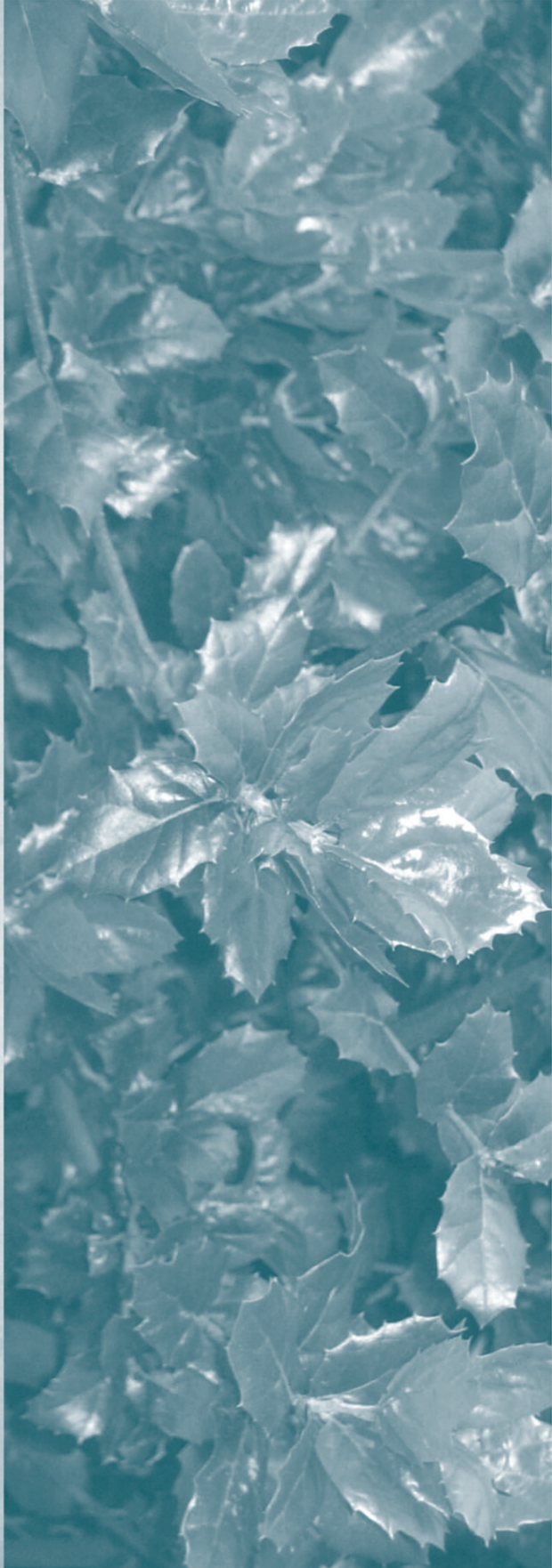
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and discover excellent questions to ask yourself and any potential spiritual directors you choose to interview. To locate a spiritual director or guide, go online to *Seek and Find Guide: A Worldwide Resource of Available Spiritual Directors*. More than 5,000 spiritual directors are listed by geographical location at [www.sdiworld.org](http://www.sdiworld.org). ✍







## Ode to a Coast Live Oak

Bark of alligator skin, moss laden  
Your strong, contorted arms spread wide  
What faith you have in dropping  
Your children to the earth  
Where brother squirrel buries some  
To grow up down the road  
And of others makes a feast.  
Bark of alligator skin, moss laden  
Your strong, contorted arms spread wide  
Welcoming your guests -  
God knows how many and varied they are:  
Squirrels, raccoons and then those birds!  
Like the red-tailed hawk who burst from hiding  
In your canopy and with consummate ease  
Rose silent on the updraft.  
Is she alive because she ate the squirrel  
That consumed your progeny?  
And do you yet grant her the comfort of your bosom?  
And how many of her siblings have found repose  
In your arms, O tree hospitable!  
Bark of alligator skin, moss laden  
Your strong, contorted arms spread wide  
Do you ever resent these visitors  
Who arrive random, unannounced?  
How about those nematodes and borers?  
I've heard you're somehow sentient -  
If you were an Ent (not saying you ain't)  
What would you say about them?  
Bark of alligator skin, moss laden  
Your strong, contorted arms spread wide  
Performing daily your alchemy of turning  
The poison of my every out-breath to  
The very thing I must breathe or else die.  
Dear faithful friend, live oak,  
Would to God my life were half as  
True as yours.

- Carl Grant [California, USA]



# ASK OWL

**Q**uestion: *How do I know if I am on a path to become a spiritual director or guide? I think I might be, and want to learn about my next steps.*

**H**oot Hoot: When this query grows in your mind and heart, recognize that a listening process has already begun! Pay attention when you notice an inner spark that may begin with a question such as, "I wonder if I'm called to this ..." or "I could be a spiritual director ..." The very first step for everyone who considers this question is to be in a spiritual direction relationship with a spiritual director or guide. The flow that emerges is a process of listening, contemplative practice such as prayer and meditation, and discernment. Listening for the call to serve as a spiritual director takes place within your own heart, your lived experience, and in the context of relationships with people who know you. Be willing to spend time in this process and to be both challenged and surprised. Perhaps this spark is rising in you because of an aspect in your existing work life, or simply because you have a compassionate heart and love of God, and for others.



you will develop relationships with other local participants is important. Questions to ask during your research process include:

- What is the spiritual affiliation of the program?
- Describe the length and style of the program.
- What are the costs of the program and application process?

• What practical skills will I learn and how will I be supervised?

• How will spirituality and theology be taught?

• May I speak to former students about your program? How can I contact them?

Continue to listen. You do not need to fully know the answer before you take your next step in formation or education. The process itself brings an emerging wisdom, and good program facilitators will aid in bringing clarity to you. Trust your inquiry and process. 🌿

—If you have a question for Owl, please e-mail [Listen@sdiworld.org](mailto:Listen@sdiworld.org).

Research and discernment of a potential formation or training program is important. Ask your spiritual director about his or her training. Visit the Spiritual Directors International website where you will find more than two hundred varied programs offering spiritual direction formation and training. You can use the "Enrichment, Formation, and Training Program Locator" to research various programs. The service is free, and located at [www.sdiworld.org](http://www.sdiworld.org) in the "resources" section.

You may discover you want a specific program that could include a summer intensive or distance learning option. Maybe you prefer a formal academic degree that will include your training and education. Perhaps a local program where



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“Tending the holy around the world and across traditions ...

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—Translated by Marta Rios and Xavier Ortiz Monasterio

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